DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 405 262 SO 026 838

AUTHOR Gomez, Aurelia; Sullivan, Laura Temple
TITLE Folk Arts in the Home: New Mexican Straw Applique.
INSTITUTION New Mexico State Office of Cultural Affairs, Santa Fe. Museum of New Mexico.
PUB DATE 95
NOTE 6p.
AVAILABLE FROM Museum of International Folk Art, Education Department, PO Box 2087, Santa Fe, NM 87504-2087, 505-827-6350.
PUB TYPE Guides - Classroom Use - Teaching Guides (For Teacher) (052)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Art Activities; Art Education; *Design Crafts; Elementary Secondary Education; Folk Culture; Handicrafts; *Hispanic American Culture
IDENTIFIERS *Applique; *New Mexico

ABSTRACT

In the 16th century the Spanish introduced marquetry techniques to the New World. The term "marquetry" applies to two different types of surface decoration: inlay and veneer; straw applique as it is practiced in New Mexico combines both techniques.) The introduction of marquetry dovetailed with the pre-Hispanic Aztec tradition of decorating surfaces with feather and shell mosaics. By the late 18th and 19th century straw and corn husks were used against dark colored wood to create a high contrast that imitated gold leaf. Twentieth century straw applique designs are both abstract and figurative and appear on crosses, candles, sconces, nichos, wall plaques, boxes, and chests. This lesson plan, "Making a Straw Applique Design," includes objectives, vocabulary terms in English and Spanish, materials, motivation, procedure, evaluation, and extensions and connections. Contains three references and names, addresses and phone numbers for three New Mexican community resource contact persons. (MM)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND
DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL
HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Laura Temple Sullivan

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

☒ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

ED 405 262

FOLK ARTS IN THE HOME:

NEW MEXICAN STRAW APPLIQUÉ

SO 026838

Museum of International Folk Art
a part of the Museum of NewMexico
Education Department
P.O. Box 2087
Santa Fe, NM 87504-2087
(505) 827-6350 **© 1995**

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

FOLK ARTS IN THE HOME: NEW MEXICAN STRAW APPLIQUÉ

Many cultures around the world use straw in combination with other materials to decorate functional objects. In New Mexico straw and corn husks were adhered onto wooden surfaces to create a striking contrast of color and design. While there is very little documentation of the art of straw appliqué, its roots can be seen in "marquetry" traditions in Europe. "Marquetry" is a term that applies to two different types of surface decoration, inlay and veneer. Inlay refers to a process that involves cutting a shallow depression in the surface of one material and then filling the depression with cut pieces of a contrasting material to create a design. Veneer is a process that involves fitting together the decorative materials to form a thin sheet and then applying it to the surface of the object. Straw appliqué as it is practiced in New Mexico is a combination of both techniques. The straw covers just a portion of the surface, as in inlay, and is adhered or added onto the surface plane, as in veneer.

A highly developed art form in ancient Egypt, Greece and Rome, marquetry spread across Northern Africa and was practiced in Spain during the Roman occupation and the Moorish invasion in the 8th century. During the 16th century, Renaissance craftsmen developed highly elaborate inlay patterns combining geometric, floral and figurative motifs. In rural Spain, furniture, especially chests and cabinets, was decorated with a variety of materials such as exotic woods, shell, bone and ivory.

In the 16th century, the Spanish introduced marquetry techniques to the new world. This introduction dovetailed with the pre-hispanic Aztec tradition of decorating surfaces with feather and shell mosaics. In Mexico, marquetry artisans also used the abundant materials of tortoise shell and mother of pearl to create ornamental patterns. By the late 18th and 19th century, straw and corn husk appliqué had flourished and spread all over the western world. The placement of straw, a yellow or gold colored organic material, against a dark colored wood created a high contrast that imitates gold leaf.

Many crosses were created out of wood and decorated with straw in Spain and Mexico during the colonial period. The cross-making tradition was introduced in New Mexico where straw appliqué crosses are still being created today. In Spanish Colonial New Mexico wood was split from pine logs, sawed and hand-adzed to shape, then coated, probably with a combination of pine rosin, soot, wax and water. Straw was split down the middle with a blade, flattened and cut into thin strips. The straw was applied to the surface of the wood, which was sticky from the application of the rosin mixture. Patterns and designs were created by organizing the straw pieces into geometric or representational forms.

Popular geometric patterns on straw appliqué crosses included stars, rosettes, diagonal lines and chevrons. Representational designs were primarily floral or vegetal. Contemporary straw appliqué artisans use milled lumber and black paint to coat the wood; aside from that modern use, many of the techniques are consistent with those from the 1800's. Twentieth century straw appliqué designs are both abstract and figurative (including scenes from the Bible of the life of Jesus,

Mary, and the saints) and appear on crosses, candle sconces, nichos, wall plaques, boxes and chests.

MAKING A STRAW APPLIQUÉ DESIGN

Objectives

1. Students will understand the development of the straw appliqué tradition in New Mexico as it relates to the history and culture of the Southwest (historical and cultural understanding).

2. Students will learn about what materials were employed and how they were used to create designs in the straw appliqué tradition (perceiving, analyzing and responding).

3. Students will find different solutions in the process of creating a straw appliqué design by exploring form, texture, line, shape, pattern, repetition and the relationship of parts to the whole (creating and performing).

Vocabulario	Vocabulary
paja aplicada	straw appliqué
ataracea	Hispanic Moresque marquetry work
caja	box
nicho	niche

Technical Vocabulary

marquetry	surface decoration techniques of inlay and veneer
inlay	cutting into the surface of a piece of wood and placing contrasting materials to create a visually pleasing design
chevron	A shape or pattern with a v-shape or an inverted v-shape.

Materials

One piece of black tagboard per student, approximately 8" x 8", scissors, corn husks, straw, toothpicks, glue, cardboard or heavy paper aproximately 8" x 8", magazines and old calendars to cut pictures out from, pencils.

Motivation

1. Show samples of straw appliqué from New Mexico and other types of inlay from Europe by using artifacts, photos and /or slides.
2. Discuss the evolution of straw appliqué from other marquetry forms, relating it to the use of available materials.
3. Prepare the students for doing fine design work by giving them many very small pieces of black and yellow colored paper or parquetry blocks to create different patterns and designs.
4. Ask students how they can create a straw appliqué design out of the materials provided.

Procedure

1. Cut the corn husk or straw into small pieces. Experiment cutting out different shapes. Notice how the serrated texture of the corn husk can be used as a design element.
2. Arrange the pieces on the black piece of tagboard and come up with a design you like.
3. Glue the corn husk and or straw pieces in place. Enjoy your work.

Evaluation

Group the designs on a bulletin board. Have the students comment on the different patterns and approaches to designs. Which designs are symmetrical? Which are random? Why? Did they use a variety of geometric shapes in their work, if so, which ones? Did they utilize repetition in their designs? Which shapes did they repeat and what effect does the repetition have? Suggest that they come up with names for their patterns and designs.
Encourage students to present their work to the class, emphasizing the process they used and problems they encountered and resolved.

Extensions and Connections

Study color theory by comparing the way different colors look when they are placed together. Do torn paper collages using two different colors of construction paper. The subject matter could be a still life or an abstract design. (Art)

Get pieces of wood from the school industrtial arts class or a local carpenter. Paint or stain the wood and apply straw or corn husk to it. (Art)

Make a large frame out of wood or dark colored matt board. Divide up the areas and have each student adhere straw or corn husk to create their own design. Use the frame to present the class picture or special projects. (Art)

Find out where straw and corn grow. This could be a local, statewide or national study. Graph the areas where these crops grow best and find out why. (Math & Science)

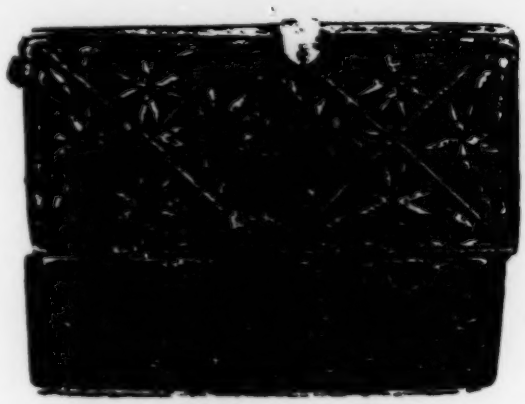
Interview local farmers. Find out what they grow and what they do with their produce. (Language Arts and Social Studies)

Look at examples of the way that other cultures use straw to decorate. Locate them on a world map. Compare and contrast cultures and styles. (Social Studies/Art)

Discuss other uses of straw around the world, look at housing, animal feed, clothing, etc... (Social Studies).

Write a step by step description of how to make a straw appliqué design. (Language Arts)

Find out where colors come from. Test the ability of different materials to release pigments, like grass, blueberries, beets and different types of earth and plants, by rubbing them on paper. Make a chart showing the source material and color that comes off of it. (Science)



Community resources

Charlie Sanchez
P.O. Box 456
Albuquerque, NM 87103
w (505) 248-6281
h (505) 865-5409 (Tomé)

Krissa Lopez
P.O. Box 3691
Fairview Station
Española, NM 87533
(505) 753-2785

Jimmy Trujillo
1014 22nd Street NW
Albuquerque, NM 87104
(505) 842-0039

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Adult Resources

Boyd, E. Popular Arts of Spanish New Mexico. Santa Fe: Museum of New Mexico Press, 1974.

Gavin, Robin Farwell. Traditional Arts of Spanish New Mexico. Santa Fe: Museum of New Mexico Press, 1994.

Padilla, Carmella & Pierce, Donna. "Poor Man's Gold," Spanish Market. (July, 1995), pp. 56-58.